

City of Allentown Citizen / Customer Relations Management 311 System

*"Making City Government More Responsive,
Accountable and Cost Effective."*



Background

First established in 1973, the City of Allentown (COA) 911 System has received and dispatched citizens' requests for Police, Fire, EMS, Animal Control, Parking Authority, and Public Works assistance. In 1993 the 911 Center was relocated from City Hall to the 1st floor of 1304 W. Fairmount St.

The State has mandated that, as of June 2019, the City of Allentown 911 system is to be decommissioned. The Emergency calls receive and dispatch will be transferred to Lehigh County 911 system. This transition is currently being coordinated / negotiated between the City of Allentown and County of Lehigh.

As a result of investigation of repurposing the 911 facility / property the City discovered that the transfer of 911 (Emergency Call Handling) frees up applicable City of Allentown facilities, related equipment, and other human & financial resources thereby creating an opportunity to significantly improve customer (citizen) services and more fully develop inner and intra departmental efficiencies through a Customer Relations Management (CRM) / 311 (Non-Emergency Call Handling) System.



What is a Customer (Citizen) Relations Management / 311 System and how would it work?

Citizen / Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

A system that streamlines how each Department / Bureau handles a customer (citizen) interaction and establishes management best practices & performance measurement.

It also networks the process and outcome, communicates the results to the customer (citizen), and seeks customer (citizen) satisfaction monitoring.

The results of which would be available to appropriate City managers and decision makers for quality assurance, operational improvement and accountability. Data would also be available to residents illustrating tax dollar application.



How would a CRM / 311 system work?

- EXAMPLE
- Currently if an Allentown resident wants to report a pothole in the street, this would be the process:
- Resident must try to determine which Department / Bureau handles potholes (In this case it is Department of Public Works (DPW) / Streets Bureau)
- Resident must look up from phone book, City web site, or internet, and dial that 10-digit telephone number (In this case it is 610-437-8775)
- Resident must report the pothole location and specifics (e.g. size)
- DPW/Streets Bureau employee enters pothole location and specifics into the DPW computer work order system.
- DPW / Streets Bureau work order issued to streets work crew to repair pothole
- DPW / Streets Bureau enters project completed info into work order system
- There is no follow up or customer satisfaction follow up with initiating resident
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How would a CRM / 311 system work?

- **With a centralized 311 / CRM System:**

- The Allentown resident would Dial 311
- A cross-trained 311 operator / customer advocate would utilize a computer drop down menu (like that currently used by 911 operators) for pothole and record location and specifics of pothole as well as resident information. They would also ask resident if they wanted to be notified when pothole was repaired, and if so by what method of communication (e.g. phone call, e-mail, text, etc.)
- The 311 operator / customer advocate would then utilize the CRM software to initiate a “ticket,” which would interact with current DPW software to issue a Work Order to DPW / Streets Bureau for crew to fix the pothole.
- DPW / Streets Bureau enters completed project info into work order system which automatically notifies 311 Center
- 311 Center automatically notifies resident of issue resolve
- 311 Center may also conduct a Customer Satisfaction Survey at that time or at a later date.
- Because CRM software can be networked with City Geographical Information System (GIS), management reports can be created showing historic pothole activity and used as management information for street repair and replacement planning.

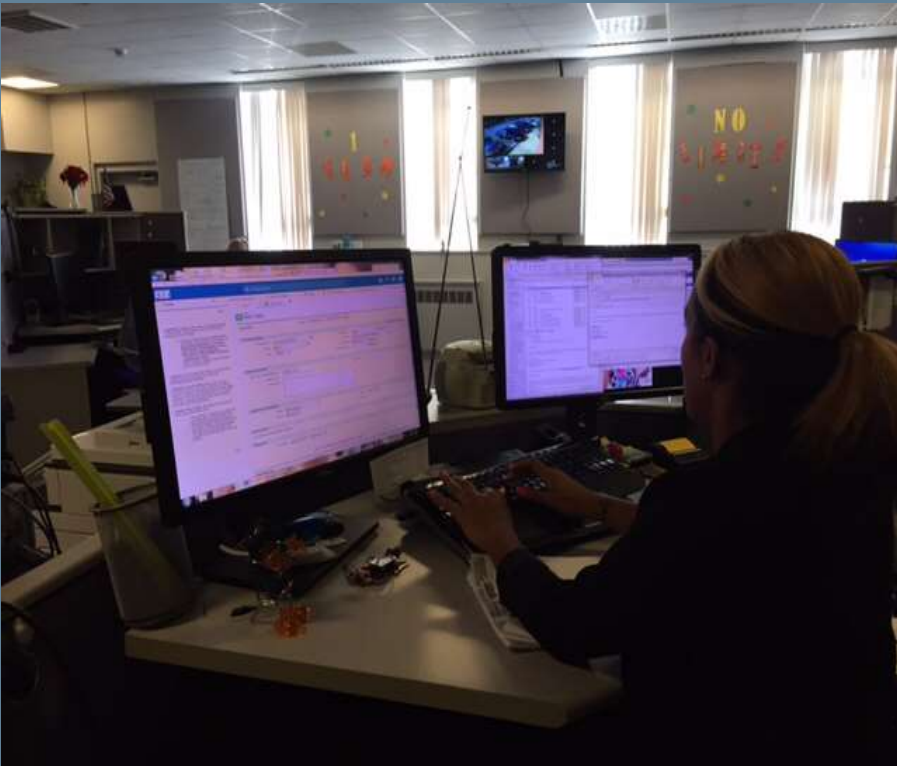
Research

- Currently as many as 265 US Cities / Counties have one form or another of a 311 / CRM System.
- The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has established a 311/CRM Technical Assistance Service division to assist existing and prospective member 311/CRM systems.
- The Discovery Team utilized several of ICMA 311/CRM publications, associates, and staff to research other governmental 311/CRM systems and benchmark to City of Allentown.



Site Tours

- In an effort to provide a more detailed and insightful analysis of ICMA illustrated 311 / CRM System Municipalities the Discovery Team conducted site tours of the following:
- **The Philly311 Center** successfully consolidated all non-emergency calls to City hall into one centralized system. They also encourage and facilitate Walk In citizen interaction. Philly311 Center excelled at outreach to the Community for use as well as social media interaction. All Department heads do not report to the City Managing Director, therefore the software system used by the 311 center is not integrated with other Departmental software systems so it only reports (not tracks) contact issues.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gx2g-oJ_h1o
- **Hampton VA 311 Center** services a population of approximately 145K (similar to Allentown). The Hampton 311 Center successfully consolidated all non- emergency calls to City hall into one centralized system. Their current set up does not facilitate Walk In citizen interaction. They quite successfully integrated the 311 software system into multiple departmental software systems so that each call ticket issued can be tracked for execution and measuring effectiveness relative to performance standards. They were quite successful at engaging and integrating the operations of each department creating a true CRM system.



Building and Equipment

- The City of Allentown 911 Center & Communications Repair & Maintenance Operations are located at 1304 W. Fairview Street. This 1932 building is located on 9.56 acres of property that is part of the Allentown Parks System, making the potential for separation and sell off of this facility difficult.
- The existing 911 Center is located on the 1st floor (5,300 SF +/-) and its layout, technology infrastructure, and dispatching equipment provides an ideal opportunity for reuse as a 311 / CRM Center.



COA 311/CRM Center Operating Budget

COA 311/CRM CENTER OPERATING BUDGET	
	<u>\$/year</u>
<u>311/CRM COST</u>	<u>\$627,408</u>
Personnel (9 FTE or equivalents)	\$ 398,400
Personnel Benefits (37%)	\$ 147,408
Non-Personnel (e.g. technology licensing fees/service, materials & supplies, community outreach, training, etc.)	\$ 81,600
<u>REVENUE SOURCES</u>	<u>\$834,204</u>
Current COA General Fund Contribution to 911 Center	\$561,300
Personnel Shifted from Existing Operations to 311 Center (4.5 FTE)	\$199,200
Personnel Benefits Shifted from Existing Operations to 311 Center (4.5 FTE)	\$73,704
<u>Net Annual Operational Savings of 311/CRM Returned to COA General Fund</u>	<u>\$206,796</u>

This table illustrates preliminary annual budget expenditures and funding sources for the proposed Allentown 311/CRM Center.

NO NEW CITY FUNDING WOULD BE REQUIRED, as the annual expenses are more than offset by the current 911 Center General Fund savings and the fact that 50% of the proposed 311 Center staffing (and benefits) would be existing employees transferred from respective Departments / Bureaus. This conservative 311 budget returns approximately \$206,796 annually to the City of Allentown General Fund.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- Current 911 Center transition offers the perfect opportunity for the City of Allentown to make City government significantly more responsive to its citizens, accountable, and cost effective through the creation of a City of Allentown 311/CRM system.
- This can be done with NO additional tax burden on the citizens of Allentown by utilizing existing City financial and human resources while at the same time annually returning approximately \$206,796 to the General Fund.
- Furthermore, the existing 911 Center's layout, technology infrastructure, and dispatching equipment provides an ideal opportunity for use as a 311 / CRM Center.



Next Steps

- **Acquire and Implement Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) System for all City of Allentown (COA) Voice / Data (Q1-2017)**

This initiative was previously approved and funded by Allentown City Council. It would modernize the City's voice / data system, provide valuable Customer Relations Management information, and serve as a platform for a 311 / CRM system.

- **Create a COA 311 / CRM "Launch Team" (Q1-2017)**

This Launch Team would oversee the Design & Implementation of CRM System targeted to most effected Departments / Bureaus as well as a COA 311 Center.

- **RFP(s) / Contract(s) for Vendors / Consultant (s) (Q2- 2017)**

- **Create COA CRM System (Q3-2017)**

- **COA Personnel, Capital & Operational Budget (Q3-2017)**

- **Hire COA Senior Customer/Citizen Relations Management/311 Center Manager (Q3-2017)**

- **311 Call Center Design & Build (Q4-2017)**

- **311 Call Center Implementation (Q1-2018)**

